



City of Courtenay

Affordable Housing Policy

Adopted November 13, 2007

Department of Planning Services

Affordable Housing Policy

1. Introduction

Affordable Housing is an issue facing governments of all levels. Many communities around the Province are or have developed a range of strategies and their experiences are things that we can learn from. Within the Comox Valley, it is an issue involving all local governments not just the City. For persons with low or moderate incomes finding housing within their financial means has become increasingly difficult. Housing remains a cornerstone of a strong community providing stability and well-being for the individual which ultimately affects the social, economic and environmental sustainability of the City.

Providing a range of housing opportunities and support services will contribute to the overall social well-being of a community.

2. Adopted Strategies

The strategies presented recognize that the majority of the responsibility for providing direct financial support for adequate housing and programs rests with the federal and provincial governments and that the local government which relies on a very limited financial framework has a lesser but still important role. This strategy is based on the City's role as addressing regulatory mechanics and advocating for more program delivery from other sources in the provision of affordable housing.

A. Regulatory Framework

The City will review best practices in the areas of OCP, zoning and subdivision bylaws for greater densification and inclusionary land use regulation by:

1. *Expanding the application of secondary suites and secondary residences. This can be achieved by:*
 1. *Encouraging the provision of secondary suites in areas seeking single residential lot zoning.*
 2. *Reducing the rezoning application fee from \$1,750.00 to \$500.00 for an existing developed residential property to allow for a secondary suite.*
 3. *Examining the application of secondary suites and residences for an area through the Local Area Planning process.*
 4. *Examining the infrastructure requirements in all new developments to accommodate secondary suites.*
 5. *Maintaining identical DCC fees for a single residence with a secondary suite as for a single residence.*
2. *Examine the application of inclusionary zoning which will require the provision of affordable housing as part of residential developments.*
 1. *Density housing and/or comprehensive development zoning be used to increase densities which provides an opportunity to negotiate public amenities including affordable housing. It can also encourage a variety of housing types and more compact community.*

2. *Engage in housing agreements entered into by the City and a corporation, either non-profit or profit to ensure a housing project is built and will remain affordable.*
3. *Develop a framework for density bonuses to achieve a ratio that will be used by the private sector.*
3. *Provision for small lot infill development in existing neighbourhoods through the Local Area Plan process.*
4. *Continued support for mixed use developments and increase in densities near or adjacent to major destinations in the City.*
5. *Not support the conversion of existing occupied multi-residential buildings from rental until the vacancy rate exceeds 2%. This will help prevent the loss of rental housing stock.*
6. *Not support the rezoning of existing mobile home parks unless the applicant has arranged and paid for the relocation or purchase of the existing homes to the satisfaction of Council.*
7. *Explore and implement means to prohibit the demolition of existing buildings currently providing housing.*
8. *Reducing application and permit fees by 50% for an affordable housing project subject to an agreement with the City or agency approved by the City.*
9. *Consider the provision for affordable housing units/funds and/or staff housing on any future rezoning of property.*
10. *Review the height of buildings in selected sites.*
11. *Evaluate current zoning designations throughout the City that are vacant or underutilized in order to re-consider zoning only when a project is brought forward to Council.*

B. Advocacy and Engagement

The City will work on means to support funding and programs for low income, non-market and low end market housing people in need by:

1. *Providing staff expertise to facilitate the development of affordable housing to agencies, social groups and private individuals needing assistance through the preparation and project development approval process.*
2. *Support the creation of and partner with an Affordable Housing Steering Committee representing the Comox Valley through the new Comox Valley Regional District including the federal and provincial governments, Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) and non-profit organizations and the development industry where applicable to increase the supply of affordable units and programs. This committee would replace the City's current Affordable Housing Committee.*
3. *Requiring the provincial and federal governments to institute tax reforms that will assist in the provision of affordable housing including:*
 1. *Advocate for the elimination of the provincial property transfer tax, PST and GST for all affordable housing projects.*
 2. *Advocate for the elimination of the provincial property transfer tax, PST and GST for all first-time home purchasers.*

3. *Advocate that the provincial property transfer tax collected from the Comox Valley be allocated to an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund for the Comox Valley.*
4. *Support the creation of an Affordable Housing Fund for the Comox Valley with membership and financial contribution from Courtenay, Comox, Cumberland and Electoral Areas A,B and C of the Regional District. This would include policies and implementation through a Regional Growth Strategy Plan.*
5. *Working with the development industry to explore ways to reduce costs in providing affordable housing*
6. *Coordinate the sharing of housing information with other local governments and non-profit organizations and the development industry.*
7. *Work with other local governments and the regional district to harmonize the development, registration and approval process for the provision of Affordable Housing.*
8. *Explore the opportunities to use municipal, provincial and School District properties for affordable housing projects.*